

My name is Lois M. Nitch and I am from Rocky Hill, am testifying on the Governor's proposed budget H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 that unfortunately does not include critical funding for our safety net providers and their employees.

After decades of underfunding, Connecticut's direct support providers are in crisis mode because the effects of the pandemic have impacted their ability to attract and retain direct care workers and other employees. This staff is critically important to the safety and well-being of many of Connecticut's residents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), including my own family.

I want to tell you first-hand what cuts to the DDS budget can do to an individual. I have seen my son, Andy go from a happy, healthy man to a man that is broken. He lost his home, day program, job and friends and staff that were in his life for over 18 years all because there wasn't the funds to keep his Oak Hill Group home open. This was his home and to have to close it was a horrible thing to do to Andy and his roommate or brothers as he refers to them. He lost his day program and I had to find him a new home and he still is looking for a day program I began this journey with Andy 56 years ago and my goals have never changed. To ensure Andy has the best quality of care and a home to keep him safe and to give him every opportunity to grow to his highest potential. At this stage in my life I should not have to be fighting another battle but I am because I have worked too hard and long for Andy's group home and day programs. I will continue to fight for money for the safety net to insure our precious children are safe and have a quality of life.

As legislators you can make decisions that can help people live lives to their highest potential. Andy's home and day program were a success, I can't believe what has happen to all the hard work Andy and I have put into making his life better. Right now Andy is in a state group home and has adjusted to his new home and is doing much better. We as parents should not have to keep fighting for our children.

Without your help, our state's community service delivery system will continue to shrink and our loved ones will bear the brunt of this loss. We are already experiencing the worst staffing crisis that service providers have ever seen, which has resulted in an inability to resume programs paused during COVID and caused a rebound effect for family caregivers who are unable to return to work and contribute to Connecticut's economy.

Now more than ever, we need to ensure that critically necessary funding of \$150 million is included in this year's budget for the state's non-profit providers who

care for our loved ones on a daily basis. We urge your support and ask that you add this funding to the budget before this committee.
